

## **HAWKSMOORE: Tales of the City**

Mini-series proposal

By

Mike Costa

**Just prior to his recruitment into Stormwatch, Jack Hawksmoor's investigation into a murder case unravels the secrets of his own past, and recruits him into a dangerous fight for the future.**

### **MISSION**

This story will expand the history of the character of Jack Hawksmoor. It will enrich the story of his origin by shedding more light onto the people that built him and the place they came from. It will also explain how a man utterly separated from society by being horribly experimented on and given freakish powers could be such a compassionate, well-adjusted individual we first meet in Stormwatch #37. Also, it will explain the absence of a family for Jack, and how this has affected him.

The story is a pastiche of noir detective stories. It takes place in foggy San Francisco, and it shares the conventions of a gruff, anti-social hero investigating a mysterious crime that proves to have connections to other, seemingly random events in his life, including his personal relationships and problems. Also it will employ voice-over narration to get us into his head and carry the plot forward, all the while giving us a subtle window into the changes he undergoes, both personally, and in his understanding of his unique super-powers and responsibilities.

Ultimately, this is a story of a lonely man realizing he need not be alone. In the beginning, Jack is the classic noir detective – violent and misanthropic. He lets his fists do the talking, and he has no significant relationships with any other people. This is as much an act of self-annihilation as it is any vendetta against a world which he feels has wronged him. Through the course of the story, his relationship towards cities, the character of Sarah, and himself is forced to change by circumstance, ultimately bringing him to the realization that though it's a risk to allow people (and, in light of who he is, cities) into his heart and into his trust, ultimately it's his path to being a better person, and exorcizing his demons.

### **STORY**

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### Issue 1:

We open on a splash of San Francisco Harbor – there's a giant robot attacking it. In the foreground, close enough to us to be seen, yet still dwarfed by the marauding giant, is Jack Hawksmoor, springing into action. Follow this with a two page-spread – the Golden Gate bridge is shivering from a collision, and Jack is screaming at it like a general to his division – barking orders to individual pieces to flex or re-enforce so it doesn't collapse, even as he engages the threat head-on.

He dramatically defeats the huge robotic war-machine by ensnaring it in the steel cables of the Golden Gate Bridge and then having it smashed and swallowed by some of the city's ruins that were submerged in the bay from the 1906 quake, but some of the property damage from the battle nearly claims the life of a civilian – a young woman in her car finds itself directly under the descending fist of the machine. Jack snatches her from harms way at the last moment, but her car is destroyed.

Satisfied that the woman is okay – though she's badly shaken – Jack returns to finish off the robot. Preoccupying himself with disabling the servos that control the last functional shoulder, he doesn't see the hatch open and the pilot escape, but the woman from the smashed car does, she steps up and cold-cocks him. Nobody totals her Jetta. Jack is impressed. The authorities take the man away, but have trouble with clean-up. There is now a massive robot standing immobile in San Francisco harbor.

Jack, meanwhile, has struck up conversation with this woman, Sarah, who is obviously tougher than she looks. And there's something else. Jack is detecting something implacable – his extra-normal powers are picking up something slightly... *off* about her. And that punch she gave the fleeing pilot landed a little too solidly for an untrained civilian. She confesses – she had tried her hand at being a costumed adventurer, back in the late 80s, but she gave up the life. It wasn't for her – just a lark she had as a young girl. In fact, she's gotten so used to her civilian life it was a huge effort to screw up her courage and not panic like some “regular” person during this whole catastrophe. Is this all there is to her story? Jack is intrigued... but his attention is drawn by some other crisis in the city, so this conversation is to-be-continued.

Jack is finding his connection to cities is growing and taking on stranger properties, both more subtle and more confusing. He's starting to occasionally sense things – maybe people? – out there that somehow don't belong, but it's too abstract, like a faint smell of gasoline in a bakery. It's one of these feelings that draws him now

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toward a particular office, and inside he finds a man murdered. The city, usually so forthcoming and easy to understand, is giving him nothing but weird static and info that doesn't add up. How was this man killed in his own office, with an entire floor of workers bustling just outside the door? How did the killer get in and out, with a door locked from the inside? For some reason, he can't just play this murder back on a bay-window. He's going to actually have to do some gumshoeing.

The building won't tell Jack who murdered this man, but it can't hide the fact that there's an object in the room that doesn't belong - a dog-tag-like fetish clutched in the man's tightened fist, perhaps snapped from the neck of his attacker. There's an odd symbol on it, and it hums with unknown circuitry that gives Jack a nasty shock when he tries to pry it open.

There's not much that Jack can do about it now. His detective skills are only rudimentary. He makes the next logical step - toss the guy's home.

Entering the house that evening is no problem for Jack - doors just open when he asks them to. The search of the victim's place yields very few clues. The guy had a family, but a message on the machine reveals they're out of town for the week. Lots of pictures of the guy at various ground-breaking ceremonies. Lots of blue-prints for urban development. Nothing incriminating.

Then there's a noise at the door - someone else creeping into the place. Jack ambushes the intruder, ready to strike... it's Sarah, from the bridge. What's SHE doing there?

### Issue 2:

Sarah, terrified, explains hastily - she and the murdered man worked together - she's a structural inspector who worked on his staff. In fact, the very reason she was on the bridge that day was because she was inspecting it. Hawksmoor is dubious, but she rattles off some technical jargon, then plays back a message on the man's machine confirming that she was indeed inspecting the struts on the bridge for him earlier that day. There are pictures of the two of them at work sites - they definitely worked together. She was stopping by his house because he never called her back. The door was open. Still riled up from the action earlier, she thought she'd investigate.

This story seems to hold up... but Hawksmoor is still unconvinced. There's more to this story, he's sure of it. But there's nothing he can prove, so he lets the girl go. If she tries to leave the city he'll know.

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It's easy for him to keep tabs on people when the streets themselves can tattle to him. He leaves, to go be alone with his thoughts.

Vaulting the clustered spires of San Fran (itself a rather compact city, not particularly large) he ruminates on its weird misbehavior. Not filling him in on more murder details, being strangely un-cooperative, etc. But this isn't a new thing for him. Frankly, San Francisco is a city he has a lot of ambivalence for, as his troubled inner-monologue lets us in on. In fact, his dislike of the city is so strong, he's considering dropping this whole convoluted business and heading back to safe, comfortable NY... but before he can even finish this thought, the city is rocked by an explosion.

Arriving at the scene, Jack zeros in on the assailants, both displaying super-human powers - heightened speed, strength and agility. He chases them over the rooftops and manages to tackle one. Oddly the bomber recognizes Jack, and is weirdly shocked to see him. Jack takes this brief distraction to attack, but the guy is tough. Strength-wise, they're pretty evenly matched but Hawksmoor has the city to rely on...

Except, he doesn't. San Fran is betraying him again. Buildings aren't listening to him. Power-lines won't get out of his way. He's fighting a difficult opponent and his connection to the city is like a spotty cell-phone.

Through pure brute-strength, Jack manages to best this guy, but he won't be taken alive. Jack has the briefest moment to notice the same fetish he took off the murder victim before his enemy detonates himself like a suicide bomber, blasting Jack through the wall of a nearby building, into a ratty bedroom where two people are comedically caught in the act. The couple is freaked out, the woman even more so, horrified that with this stranger suddenly seeing them her husband will find out what's been going on.

Rattled, battered, and his ears ringing, Jack has an idea. An hour later he shows up at Sarah's house. He's pretty banged up and he needs a place to lay up and someone who has experience with super-human injuries... but he also has figured something out. She was having an affair with the murdered man, wasn't she?

Already treating his wounds while he makes the accusation, she hesitates... then admits it. Yes. But she swears, she had nothing to do with his death. Hawksmoor grabs her, roughly, and it's a classic noir-scene - all the tension, mistrust and violence exploding into passion. Not to be too gauche about it... but they totally get it on.

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Outside, night presses against the windows, and the city has troubled dreams.

### Issue 3

Hawksmoor doesn't really need to sleep anymore, so he's always groggy when he wakes up after injury forces him too. His "dreams" are jangled, abstract things – just more information for this cursed city to infect and confuse him with. San Francisco. It's obvious something bad happened here. He wakes from another nightmare, badly shaken. Sarah is trying to comfort him – what's going on with him? He doesn't want to talk about it. Instead he asks her – why aren't you a superhero anymore. What happened?

She tells her story matter-of-factly. She had always been a natural athlete, and when she turned 18 she enrolled in one of the Stormwatch recruitment programs. This was against her family's wishes – she came from a blue-collar background. Her dad was a civil engineer, and her sister worked in a bank. But she wanted something more for her life, and after testing, she was told that she had Kherubim blood in her lineage – not a lot, like the Wildcats, obviously, but a little. Enough to make her slightly stronger and faster than normal. But ultimately she didn't make the cut. Couldn't make the top percentile at the bootcamp.

Undaunted, she decided to strike out on her own, as a local hero in San Francisco. This is obviously forbidden by law after registering with Stormwatch, but she threw caution to the wind. She wanted the adventure. And for a year it was fun, but then one day she tried to halt a robbery at her sister's bank, and things went bad. Her sister was shot and killed. In the aftermath, Sarah had to face the authorities for operating illegally while on a Stormwatch watch list. In light of what happened, they let her off without prosecution, but she never put the mask on again, and never looked back. She went into structural engineering as a way to please her dad as much as anything, but the damage was already done. Her parents and she are estranged to this day.

As much as Jack is moved by this story – particularly how it reflects on his own – it gets him thinking. Her mention of being a structural engineer somehow sets off a synapse – what if there's more to the bombing than just a random act of terror and violence? Now mostly healed, Jack goes back to the scene of the crime and realizes something. His extra perception allows him to experience a full schematic of the building, and he realizes now that this building was actually one of the blue-prints in the murdered man's house. These crimes are connected. Also, the bombing was indeed scientifically set

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to cause very specific structural damage. It was less about killing than it was about leveling the building and causing the one next door to drop into the harbor. Very odd.

As he's putting this together, he's attacked. This time by the man he was unable to catch fleeing the scene the first time. Used to their heightened speed and strength now, Hawksmoor is able to move more quickly overpowered his attacker, and then he demands answers. How does they know who Hawksmoor is? What's going on? The bomber explains - we know everything because we're from the future. We know who you are because we built you.

This badly startles Jack - but not as much as the ruined wall falling on top of him, allowing the bomber to escape. The city betraying him again? Jack gives chase but the bomber doesn't go far... just right out into the harbor, into the pilot's chair of the warsuit. Of course he can drive it - he's from the 70<sup>th</sup> century, for him this is like operating a rotary phone. Jack was able to take it down the first time, but can he do it again, without the help of the city? We're about to find out.

### Issue 4

It's a nasty fight for Jack. It's dark, the city isn't listening, and there's a crazy guy in a 400 foot robotic suit trying to kill him. He just barely manages to stay alive long enough to disable the suit using just his agility and his strength, and by doing something he hasn't done before - by reading deeper into his environment. Instead of asking the city to do something for him, like create a giant concrete fist to punch something he simply looks at it a different way with his senses and reads what he sees - and what he's able to see is electromagnetic distortion of the city's power-grid that focuses, ultimately, around a particular servo in the robot's "neck" which Jack disables. It's a new way of using his powers - passively rather than actively - and it saves his life.

But he only had to do it because the city wasn't listening to him, and that's it. He's had it with this bullshit in San Francisco. The place hasn't been on his side since he arrived here, and this is making him angrier than it probably should. Once again we sense there's a greater history here, and when Jack arrives back at Sarah's place, packing her up to take her with him, she senses it too. Finally, take takes a leap of faith. He trusts this woman. He might even love her. He spills:

Jack is not in San Francisco by co-incidence, he tells her. He's there to observe the fifth anniversary of the death of his mother and his sister - the only family he had left. They were killed in the earthquake

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of 1989, when the three-decker motorway collapsed on top of them. And what haunts Hawksmoor is that the city never warned him. Never gave them a chance. Actually, the exact opposite – the city called him away as if there was some emergency elsewhere, just before the quake hit. It drew him out of the car so it could kill his family. And the deep, implacable voice of the city has no answer why. He may be the King of Cities... but perhaps, also, he is their slave as well. He's never told anyone how's he's felt about this before, but for years now he's been alone in so many ways. An outcast, a misanthrope. And now, finally, with this woman, he doesn't feel alone anymore. He wants to leave this horrible place with her, and be together.

And just then he catches movement from outside, and the house collapses on them.

Hawksmoor wakes up in a room on the 48<sup>th</sup> floor of the TransAmerica building. He's surrounded by windows, filtering in the burnt-orange glow of sunrise over the skyline. He's manacled to a steel-reinforced chair and incapacitated. He's been captured by his attackers. He can't hear the city anymore. One of them walks into the room and looks him over, amazed that he's alive, for some reason. They didn't realize Jack was around, and they're mighty pissed at him for poking his nose into their business and almost spoiling everything, but that's all over now. And just as a final twist of their victorious knife, another one brings in Sarah, who is being watched but not necessarily restrained. They know her after all. The other shoe drops – she's one of them. She's from the future too.

### Issue 5:

One of the toughs slugs Sarah in the face, and she drops. Looks like, if they were working together, they aren't anymore. The head baddie explains: they didn't expect Jack to be here, in San Fran, but no matter. He can sit here and watch the new future unfold. They know he can't talk to the city anymore, but he can still a part of it, and for killing two of their friends, they want him to feel what they're about to do. They want him to feel what their bombs are going to do on this day – tear into cities all across the globe, making subtle changes in infrastructure that will, in time, have massive consequences. These men are from the future, and the future is urbanity. Mankind's destiny is written like a huge, implacable language into its cities, and these men are here to re-write the first few chapters, to make sure *their* future comes to pass. Jack is the only one who could have sensed this and stopped them, but now he can just sit here and experience it. And the end of the day, after he's done suffering, they'll

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kill him. They leave, locking him in the room, with Sarah still unconscious on the floor.

In cities all over the world, bombers take their positions.

Back in San Fran, Sarah is conscious again. Jack isn't even looking at her. He might be more furious with her than he is with the man that brought him here. But regardless of his feelings, she talks anyway, explaining rapidly.

In the 70<sup>th</sup> century, cities cover the entire earth, including under the seas. Each major continent and ocean has its own "guardian" similar to Hawksmoor, to act as its neural center and soul. The men that have trapped him here are undergoing a plan that will change the face of modern cities such that, in the future, after centuries upon centuries of re-directed urban planning, the guardian they serve in the 70<sup>th</sup> century will end up being powerful enough to command of the whole of the world, and they'll rule as his princes. The reason that San Francisco has been misbehaving – the reason why it won't follow Jack's orders – is because these men are wearing technology that connects them to the city, much as Jack is, and they are creating interference, cutting Jack off. That's what the fetishes are. That's what they're using on him right now, keeping him stranded here.

When the urban mass that used to be Atlanta broke away and traveled back through time to exterminate man, Jack stopped it in the 70s. Something this huge moving backwards in time caused a rupture in the fabric of the universe (a bleed in the bleed.) This is how the warsuit found itself accidentally stranded in S.F. Harbor seven years before the intended invasion. And this is how these men are here now, carrying out their plans. But this rift has been slowly closing, like a wound healing itself. Soon, it would close up and these men would not get a second chance to do what they are doing. Jack is the only person who can stop them. But Jack is trapped, so how?

Sarah has a final ace up her sleeve. She's been here for five years. Planted as a mole to get close to a particular urban planner to help facilitate their plans. But she turned against her masters, resulting in them murdering him and planting bombs rather than influencing city development passively. She had been off their grid, but now she's been found. Her superpowers do not come from any Kerhubim blood. They come from a fetish of her own – implanted in the tissue under her right scapula. (Jack had seen the scar before) *This* is what Jack sensed on her the first time they'd met and what he still senses now, intoxicatingly. A connection to the city, much like his own. She had, in fact, been seeking Jack out the day he saved her on the bridge. She



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wanted him to stop what was about to happen. Her hidden fetish is still functional, and she can use it to break the interference, and restore Jack's connection, if only for a few minutes. But a few minutes should be enough.

Jack has no reason to believe her, and even less to trust her, but suddenly his connection to the city is restored. He breaks from his bonds, and goes on a rampage, taking out all of the future-men on the floor. He comes back for Sarah... is he going to kill her? Before even he's sure she's telling him - look at the map - all those different cities. Stop them! Stop them or all of those places will wail in pain for generations, as surely as a calf stuck in a feeding trough to be fattened for veal. Hawksmoor goes.

Jack begins a race against time, transporting himself from one city to the next, taking out one foot-soldier and bomb per city. Seventeen cities total, until finally he diffuses the last one bomb Tokyo, utterly exhausted.

And here, at the end of his endurance, is where his final challenge awaits him. Made aware of his disruptions, the great Guardian from the 70<sup>th</sup> century - the one that's wired into a city that covers the entire Indian sub-continent - has come through time to get his plans back on track. Think of him as Hawksmoor, model 3000. And he's here now, in the biggest city in the world, to kick Jack's ass.

### Issue 6:

The battle is brutal. Jack is hopelessly outclassed, and would be even if he wasn't totally exhausted. He has no chance. In just the battle's early rounds he's already beaten to a pulp and basically ready to accept his fate... but then this thing starts taunting Jack, relishing its impending victory. Jack the fly-in-the-ointment. Jack whom they thought they killed back in '89, but whom the city let escape. Jack, beloved as King by the cities of today, is going to die at the hands of a creature that will rule them as God.

And suddenly Jack understands - the reason they thought he was dead is because he was SUPPOSED to die in that quake. Clearly these city-rulers from the future made that bridge fall when it did. The city didn't kill Jack's family - the city actually saved Jack, using what little power it had to break from their influence and call him away. The cities never explained what happened not out of guilt, but horrible shame. This thing, beating him into the ground, killed his mother and sister, and made a city do it for him.

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Jack stands up on shattered legs, siphoning minerals out of the asphalt and willing his bones to knit. He's not stronger than his enemy, but working in his favor, however, is the short-sightedness of the God. Much like Jack himself has been up until now, he treats cities as something to be conquered, and used as a bludgeon. An extension of his will, or of his fist. In other words - he's a violent creature with no imagination, only the will to destroy and command.

But Jack has learned to listen, and to understand the more subtle communications of his cities, and to understand how they help him in ways imperceptible to the more ruthless and less nuanced creature he faces - shutting down gas-mains before he's thrown into them, yielding to his impact when he hits the street, etc. But that's not going to be enough for a win, it's just delaying inevitable defeat.

He has one advantage though; The God of Cities from the 70<sup>th</sup> century comes from a world where the entire planet is covered in urban sprawl. But Jack was a human once. And even though he can't survive out of cities for too long... he CAN survive for a while. And he is going to kill this thing. He leads the battle onto a bullet train headed out of Tokyo (one that "conveniently" arrives just as he needs it) and then gets the train to jump the tracks some 30 miles north of city limits. There, in the provincial countryside, he beats the God of Cities to death, while slowly dying himself, like a lungfish out of water too long.

The last of his strength ebbing, he collapses amongst a flock of sheep, facing south towards the city and the snow-capped cone of Fuji. Both huge and majestic. Both the results of thousands of unknowable factors working over centuries. Both monolithic in their own way, standing silent guard over the world. And who can say it's not beautiful? Hawksmoor knows, in his heart, that he is no more a prisoner of cities than he is of this planet - they're his home and he would (and as far as he knows, is about to) die defending them, he loves this world so much. He starts to drag himself toward Tokyo, but he knows he'll never make it. Up ahead he sees a small, nomadic shepherd's settlement. It's literally two huts separated by a wide place in the dusty road. It'll have to do, Jack can't make it any further, he collapses in the street, two Japanese shepherds looking at him in confused surprise.

Inside one of the huts he swims in and out of consciousness. The final time, before going under, he catches that same odd impression again. That person who doesn't quite belong - a woman from the future that vibrates on a slightly different frequency than our world - then darkness.

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When he wakes again, he's back in San Francisco, in Sarah's house, but there's no trace of her. She's gone (maybe back to the future?) but Hawksmoor is not alone. He'll never be alone with the songs of the cities in his heart.